

ministry of
environment

**Wildlife Management Areas
A Public Information Paper**



MINISTRY OF
ENVIRONMENT

1/12/20

**WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS
A PUBLIC INFORMATION PAPER**

Province of British Columbia
Ministry of Environment

July 1989

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

British Columbia. Ministry of Environment
Wildlife management areas

ISBN 0-7726-1024-X

1. Wildlife management areas - British Columbia.
I. Title.

SK471.B7B74 1989 333.95'4'09711 C89-092255-1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

British Columbia has an exceptional abundance and variety of fish and wildlife. In order to maintain these resources, it is necessary to reserve some areas of important habitat for the management of fish and wildlife. Accordingly, the Wildlife Act, proclaimed in 1982, provides the authority for the Minister of Environment, with Cabinet's approval, to designate Wildlife Management Areas on land under his administration.

Wildlife Management Areas are required to secure important fish and wildlife habitats in order to provide flexibility in management to achieve the objectives of the Ministry of Environment for fish and wildlife resources. There are three types of Wildlife Management Areas: 1) General Wildlife Management Areas on which fish and wildlife species and habitat may be intensively managed; 2) Critical Wildlife Areas for endangered or threatened species; and 3) Sanctuaries on which hunting, angling or trapping may be prohibited. Wildlife Management Areas may be designated within wilderness designations where fish or wildlife constitute the primary resource value.

A four-step procedure to designate land as a Wildlife Management Area is proposed in this plan: 1) selection of candidate areas; 2) preparation of area specific management plans; 3) acquisition of area administration; and 4) designation of Wildlife Management Areas. Multiple uses of Wildlife Management Areas will be encouraged, as will public involvement in area management.

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INTRODUCTION

British Columbia enjoys abundant and diverse fish and wildlife resources, notable on a global scale. Until this century, the demands on these resources and their associated habitats were minimal. But in the last few decades, demands for fish and wildlife populations, and for other uses of the water and land on which these populations depend, have been increasing dramatically. Historically, use of land occurred on a "first come, first served" basis, rather than by an orderly process of land allocation based on sound resource management principles. As a result, nearly all the highly productive lowlands have been allocated for purposes other than fish and wildlife management and there has been an accompanying decrease in many fish and wildlife populations. Further, the management of fish and wildlife resources was restricted by the absence of legislative authority over the land base by management agencies, such as the Recreational Fisheries and Wildlife Branches. Such authority is necessary to maintain sufficient habitat for fish and wildlife.

The maintenance of abundant wildlife populations is important to the vast majority of the British Columbian public. This was identified in a 1981 national survey by Environment Canada which found that 88.4 percent of British Columbians hold this view. In addition, public review of a proposed Wildlife Management Plan for British Columbia showed that the public recognize the need for acquisition and control by provincial resource management agencies of areas important to fish and wildlife. In response to this public demand, a new Wildlife Act was proclaimed in 1982. The Act grants authority to the Minister of Environment, with the consent of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, to designate land under his administration as a Wildlife Management Area. It is intended that through the establishment of Wildlife Management Areas, habitats of importance to fish and wildlife species can be effectively managed in accordance with the objectives of the Ministry of Environment.

This paper states the goal of Wildlife Management Areas, identifies the three types of Wildlife Management Areas, outlines procedures for their

designation, and discusses their implications. The purpose of this paper is to indicate how the Ministry of Environment will administer Wildlife Management Areas.

On June 8, 1987 the first six Wildlife Management Areas in B.C. were designated to commemorate the Wildlife Centennial in Canada. And in 1988, three additional Wildlife Management Areas were designated. The areas which have been designated to date are listed in Table 1.

Wildlife Management Areas will not eliminate the need for the established interagency referral and planning processes. These processes allow the Recreational Fisheries and Wildlife Programs to provide recommendations about the use of Crown land which falls under the jurisdiction of other government agencies. The vast majority of wildlife habitat management activities will continue to be conducted through these interagency processes.

THE GOAL OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS

The goal of Wildlife Management Areas is to secure for fish and wildlife species those habitats which are required for the achievement of those Ministry of Environment management objectives which cannot be achieved through normal referral or planning processes. The objectives are identified in provincial, regional, and species plans. Wildlife Management Areas are intended to protect endangered or threatened species, as well as to facilitate management of areas of special importance to more abundant fish and wildlife species. Such special areas might be essential to support the animals during a critical life cycle phase, such as spawning, rearing, calving, denning or nesting, or during winter. Or they may provide habitat for valuable species or be portions of migration routes. Generally, there will be more intensive management of fish and wildlife on Wildlife Management Areas than in other areas. Some Wildlife Management Areas may be located within wilderness designations where fish and wildlife constitute the primary resource value. In addition, Wildlife Management Areas may be established in order to protect Ministry of Environment interests in areas in which other agencies, such as The Nature Trust of B.C., Ducks Unlimited, federal government departments, or local governments, are involved. The availability of such protection for habitat may serve to encourage the contribution of funds and assistance from non-profit agencies, local governments, and private citizens.

TYPES OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS

There are three types of Wildlife Management Areas:

1. General Wildlife Management Area - an area of water or land of special importance to fish or wildlife, designated under Section 4 of the Wildlife Act and administered for the purposes of conservation and intensive management of fish or wildlife. Portions of such areas, or entire areas, may be identified for the purpose of viewing animals. These viewing sites will be located on areas at which there are excellent opportunities for viewing a species or a diversity of species.
2. Critical Wildlife Area - a Wildlife Management Area, or part thereof, designated under Section 5(1) of the Wildlife Act which provides habitat for any species of wildlife which has been legally designated as an endangered or threatened species, pursuant to Section 6 of the Wildlife Act.
3. Sanctuary - a Wildlife Management Area, or part thereof, designated under Section 5(2) of the Wildlife Act where all forms of human disturbance, including hunting, angling, trapping, and access are either prohibited or allowed on a restricted basis. Director's orders under Section 7(4)(a) or Regulations under Section 110(2)(b) of the Wildlife Act may be used to effect necessary controls. Sanctuaries will be areas which are particularly vulnerable to use or disturbance of fish and wildlife populations.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS IN WILDERNESS DESIGNATIONS

The provincial government's wilderness policy announced in the fall of 1987 will assist the Ministry of Environment in achievement of its fish and wildlife management objectives. Under this policy, there are three categories of wilderness designation: 1) Wilderness Areas in Provincial Forests designated under the Forest Act; 2) Recreation Areas designated under the Park Act; and 3) Class A Parks, also under the Park Act. No commercial timber harvesting is permitted in wilderness areas and access is controlled under the policies of the agencies responsible for management of the areas. Thus, these areas can provide benefits for fish and wildlife management, especially for species such as grizzly bears and cariboo that are dependent upon wilderness.

The three types of Wildlife Management Areas are unaffected by the government's wilderness policy. Wildlife Management Areas may be designated within Provincial Forest Wilderness Areas, Recreation Areas, and Class A Parks where fish and wildlife constitute the primary resource values. In such Wildlife Management Areas, natural enhancement of vegetation may be undertaken to enhance productivity for wildlife. Designations of Wildlife Management Areas within wilderness designations are dependent upon agreements with the agency responsible for the wilderness area.

In order to designate a Wildlife Management Area within a Provincial Forest Wilderness Area, a Recreation Area or Class A Park, a Section 101 transfer of administration under the Land Act is required to convey administrative authority for the area to the Minister of Environment. A management plan for a Wildlife Management Area will be submitted to the Ministry of Forests or the Ministry of Parks as input to the preparation of either a Wilderness Management Plan or a Parks Master Plan for each specific area. In the case of the Ministry of Forests, this is outlined in the draft report, "Managing Wilderness in Provincial Forests: A proposed policy framework". For all Wildlife Management Areas in wilderness designations, site-specific management plans will be developed cooperatively with the appropriate agency.

THE DESIGNATION PROCESS FOR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS

There are four major steps in the establishment of Wildlife Management Areas: 1) selection of candidate areas; 2) preparation of Management Plans; 3) acquisition of administration of the areas; and 4) designation of Wildlife Management Areas.

Step 1. Selection of Candidate Areas

Candidate areas are identified through provincial and regional fisheries and wildlife management plans, regional land management strategies, and from recommendations from Ministry of Environment staff. Recommendations from individuals, public interest groups, other government agencies, and research institutes will be accepted and evaluated with respect to program objectives. Also, candidate areas within Provincial Forests may be identified during Timber Supply Area (TSA) and Tree Farm Licence (TFL) Planning.

The candidate areas are prioritized by the Director of the Wildlife Branch, in consultation with the Director of the Recreational Fisheries Branch, to determine which areas require, or offer substantial benefits from, an increased level of management. The following factors are considered in the prioritization process:

i) Biological Factors:

- Species diversity, i.e. number of species using area
- Status of the species:
 - rare or endangered
 - management priority at regional and provincial levels
- Uniqueness of the habitat
- Importance of the habitat to species management:
 - critical habitat, winter range, migration route, calving, denning, nesting or fish spawning and rearing sites
- Present carrying capacity and successional stage
- Habitat capability
- Habitat management potential

- Wilderness values
- Size of the area:
 - viability as an ecological unit

ii) Economic Factors:

- Benefits
- Cost of purchase or lease, payments required
- Opportunity cost of alternate uses
- Annual costs: tax commitments, estimated operation and maintenance costs, management costs
- Capital improvement costs
- Financial assistance from other agencies in funding acquisition, capital costs, maintenance, and management efforts.

iii) Land Use Factors:

- Recreational potential
- Accessibility
- Options for accommodating other forms of land-use.
- Vulnerability to other forms of land use
- Imminence of alternate developments
- Potential and existing land use conflicts and resource allocation conflicts
- Possibility of administration transfer from other agencies
- Constraints to management imposed by use or ownership of adjacent lands
- Time period over which administrative control is transferred to Ministry of Environment
- Acceptability of management plan by other agencies

Step 2. Preparation of Management Plans

Management plans will be prepared for specific periods of time for each of the areas considered to be the top priorities for designation as Wildlife Management Areas.

There are four major reasons for the preparation of management plans:

- i) to inform other government agencies about plans for management of the resources of the area and so, to form the basis for agreements between agencies who administer these resources which could be affected. Such resources can include water, timber, forage, gravel, placer deposits, minerals or coal.
- ii) to justify the transfer of administrative control of Crown land, as will be discussed in Step 3 - Acquisition of Administration of Areas.
- iii) to inform the public about the proposed management of the area, possible use restrictions, and opportunities for public participation with respect to the Wildlife Management Area.
- iv) to identify the specific prescriptions for fisheries and wildlife management for the use of the management agencies.

A management plan must satisfy the four needs outlined above. It should also indicate its relationship to integrated resource plans and to regional objectives for fisheries and wildlife management. It should provide a basic description of the area, a statement of management objectives and prescriptions, the effective period of the plan, an indication of the scope of the Director's orders or O.I.C. regulations for the area, and a discussion of potential land use conflicts. The suggested outline for a management plan is shown in Appendix I.

In the preparation of management plans, it is necessary to define prescriptions for the use of other resources, such as timber and forage. The processes which apply to such allocations are outlined in Appendix II.

When complete, individual completed management plans will be forwarded by regional Ministry of Environment staff to the appropriate government agencies and public interest groups for their review, where their interests are affected. Where necessary, letters of agreement between senior levels of the appropriate administrative agencies will be developed to sanction the prescriptions for the adopted management period. If agreement on the plan cannot be reached initially, the first attempts to reach consensus will be at

the local level. If consensus is still not reached, the government agencies may elevate the question first to the Director level, then to the Deputy Minister level for resolution. Public interest groups may make representation to the Director of the Wildlife Branch or to the Minister of Environment.

Step 3. Acquisition of Administration of Area

The Ministry of Environment will next initiate action to acquire administration of the priority areas, if that authority has not already been conveyed. The Wildlife Act states that Wildlife Management Areas can only be established on areas where the Ministry of Environment has administrative authority over the land base. This authority can be attained in two major ways: i) by direct ownership and (ii) by transfer of administration.

i) Direct Ownership

Section 3 of the Wildlife Act gives the Minister the right to acquire and administer "land, improvements on land and timber, timber rights and other rights on private land" for the management or protection of fish and wildlife. Such areas may be acquired by either direct purchase or donation. Section 11 of the Wildlife Act allows the Minister to expend money from the Habitat Conservation Fund for "the acquisition of land for the maintenance of a population of any species of fish and wildlife and its habitat." Fee simple ownership provides more complete rights to the land than does any other method of acquisition. It gives the rights of a private landholder, which is very important for long-range planning and administration of ecologically important areas.

ii) Transfer of Administration

Administrative authority for an area may be transferred to the Ministry of Environment in a number of ways, and the areas in question may be either Crown or private land. The Wildlife Management Area designation will be in effect only for the length of time over which the administrative control is granted. Administrative authority can be assigned by:

- a) - lease

b) - transfers under the Land Act:

- joint transfers via
 - Land Act and Forest Act for lands in a Provincial Forest
 - Land Act and Greenbelt Act for greenbelt lands
 - Land Act and Highway Act for Ministry of Transportation and Highways lands

a) Lease

Leases are a means of acquiring full rights of management and occupation for a specific period of time. Most of the land leased by the Ministry of Environment for fish and wildlife management is owned by The Nature Trust of B.C., which usually leases land to the Minister for a period of 99 years at a nominal rental. The Ministry has full management rights subject to the lease conditions.

b) Transfers Under the Land Act

Section 101 of the Land Act allows the transfer of administration of Crown land to any ministry of the government by ministerial order. Such a transfer is one of the most effective ways for the Ministry of Environment to acquire control of important habitat areas and it has been used for a number of years. A management plan for the area is usually required by the Ministry of Crown Lands to assess the justification for the transfer. Ministry of Environment staff may request a Forest Service map notation or a Land Act designation to prevent loss of the opportunity for a Wildlife Management Area while the management plan is being developed.

With respect to Crown land within a Provincial Forest, a Minister's Order under Section 101(2) of the Land Act transferring land to the Ministry of Environment would be signed by the Ministers of Forests, Crown Lands and Environment. As the land would remain in the Provincial Forest, the provisions of the Forest Act would apply. This procedure would also be followed for designation of a Wildlife Management Area within a wilderness area in the Provincial Forest.

Greenbelt lands are established by Order in Council. They are regulated under the Greenbelt Act (RSBC 1979, c.157), which allows the Minister of Crown Lands to reserve Crown land or to acquire land as greenbelt land.

Section 7(2) of the Act allows the Minister to delegate, in writing, the management of greenbelt land. Such a delegation does not establish the right of the Minister of Environment to administer greenbelt lands, so such lands could not be designated as Wildlife Management Areas. To establish administration by the Minister of Environment over such areas, the Minister of Crown Lands would have to dispose of the greenbelt land under Section 5 of the Greenbelt Act and then, administration of the land could be transferred to the Minister of Environment via Section 101 of the Land Act.

Land under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transportation and Highways could be transferred to the Ministry of Environment via the Ministry of Crown Lands by a highway closure under Section 9 of the Highway Act, then a joint transfer under the Land Act.

Step 4. Designation of Wildlife Management Areas

When outstanding concerns have been resolved, a submission will be made to the Deputy Ministers' Committee on Environment and Land Use. The submission will indicate the scope of the proposed Director's orders or regulations for the area. The submission will then be forwarded to the Environment and Land Use Committee and then to Cabinet for final approval.

Further designations - Critical Wildlife Area or Wildlife Sanctuary - may be applied by the Minister of Environment, through regulation, to those Wildlife Management Areas which provide habitat for endangered or threatened species or where use of fish or wildlife resources or their habitats must be restricted, respectively. Director's orders for the area will reflect the degree of control necessary to protect such areas to the level required.

Orders by the Director of the Wildlife Branch prohibiting certain activities in Wildlife Management Areas, as stated in Section 7(4) of the Wildlife Act, or O.I.C. regulations under Section 110(2)(b), will be initiated as required, following Wildlife Management Area designation.

The designation of a Wildlife Management Area will be announced via a press release and the management plan will be put into effect for the Wildlife Management Area at that time. The Ministry of Environment will be responsible for managing Wildlife Management Areas. Funding for area management and enhancement activities will be provided from Program budgets, the Habitat Conservation Fund, compensation payments, or other sources. If there are major amendments of the plan, the revised plan will be referred to other concerned agencies for review. At the end of the term covered by the management plan, the plan will be evaluated by regional staff to determine whether the management objectives have been met and to aid in development of a plan for the next management period.

IMPLICATIONS OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS

Wildlife Management Areas will allow greater control over public activities where this is required to meet management objectives. On Wildlife Management Areas, Director's orders, permits, or Order in Council regulations concerning use and occupation can be used to effectively manage habitat. It is the availability of these mechanisms which makes Wildlife Management Area designation more useful than reserves or transfers of Crown land under the Land Act alone.

Multiple use of Wildlife Management Areas will be permitted where such uses are compatible with or complementary to the objectives for fish and wildlife management. However, fish and wildlife will receive resource management priority. For example, activities such as mineral or petroleum and natural gas exploration and development will be permitted where compatible with the objectives of the Wildlife Management Area.

Resource management prescriptions will be developed with affected agencies during the preparation of management plans, prior to the designation process. In many Wildlife Management Areas, issuance of new resource tenures will not be prohibited. The Wildlife Act specifies that land in wildlife management areas will be subject to all prior rights granted. Upon expiry of these rights, the Ministry of Environment will recommend to the issuing agency that they be reinstituted only where they are compatible with the objectives of the Wildlife Management Area.

Wildlife Management Areas may be designated within Provincial Forests, with the agreement of the Ministry of Forests. They may also be established in conjunction with Ecological Reserves or parks, possibly with the Ecological Reserve or park as the core area, surrounded by a Wildlife Management Area as a buffer.

It should be noted that Wildlife Management Areas differ significantly from Ecological Reserves. Ecological Reserves are areas representative of distinctive ecosystems which are reserved for present and future scientific

study or as educational areas, whereas Wildlife Management Areas are established for the purpose of wildlife management. Within all Wildlife Management Areas, including sanctuaries, animal populations and habitat may be manipulated to achieve management objectives. Traditionally, intensive management has not fallen within the mandate of the Ecological Reserves program, which is to preserve the natural environment. Wildlife Management Areas do not offer the same protection as an Ecological Reserve because they are subject to prior rights granted and to Director's orders, permits, and regulations which are subject to change. All Ecological Reserves are designated in perpetuity, whereas the term of a Wildlife Management Area is dependent upon the length of tenure under which it is established.

Where there are jurisdictional overlaps with the Federal government, some Wildlife Management Areas may be managed under a cooperative agreement with Federal agencies.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND INVOLVEMENT

Information will be provided to the public through brochures on each Wildlife Management Area, subject to available funding. The brochures will provide maps, information on the natural history of the area, and management prescriptions. Any technical management plans will be available for viewing at Ministry of Environment regional offices. An on-site public information program, consisting of signs, visual displays, and viewing facilities, may be undertaken. However, such information programs will be dependent upon funding and the objectives of the Wildlife Management Area.

Public advisory committees, composed of representatives of public interest groups, may be formed at the local level to advise the Ministry of Environment on policy aspects of public use and the management of a Wildlife Management Area, where desirable. This would ensure that, within the constraints set by fish and wildlife objectives, habitat management activities are as consistent as possible with the expectations of the public.

Public involvement in the operation of Wildlife Management Areas will be through regular contact with Ministry staff or by participation on the public advisory committees. Public interest groups will be encouraged to carry out projects prescribed in the management plan, and funds may be allocated for this purpose. The most appropriate projects for public involvement may be those that are site specific or of fairly short duration. Examples of these could include inventory projects, construction of trails and interpretive facilities, and habitat development projects, such as planting, clearing, and placing nesting or roosting structures.

TABLE 1. Wildlife Management Areas Designated Since 1987.

<u>Designated in 1987:</u>	M.U.	Size (ha)	Type
1. Junction	5-14	5,300	General
2. Pitt-Addington Marsh	2-8	4,058	General
3. Upper Cariboo River	5-15	3,090	General, in Prov. Forest
4. Chilanko Marsh	5-12	883	General
5. Dewdrop-Rosseau Creek	3-29	4,240	General
6. Tranquille	3-29	253	General
TOTAL		17,824	
<u>Designated in 1988:</u>			
1. Skedans Islands	6-12		General
Limestone Islands			
Reef Island			

APPENDIX I

Suggested Outline of a Management Plan
for a Wildlife Management Area

- I. Introduction
 - Effective Period of Plan
- II. General Description of Management Area
 1. Location
 2. Physiography
 3. Geology
 4. Climate
 5. Soils
 6. Vegetation
 7. Land Capability
- III. Historical and Present Resource Values and Land Use
 1. Wildlife
 2. Fisheries
 3. Recreation
 4. Forestry
 5. Agriculture
 6. Mining
 7. Grazing
 8. Crown Land Alienation
 9. Water
 10. Other
- IV. Proposed Wildlife Management Plan
 1. Objectives
 - Production targets
 - Preservation requirements
 - Habitat management
 2. Management Prescriptions or Policies
 - Wildlife
 - Fisheries
 - Habitat Enhancement or Improvement (including any proposed expenditures or funding)
 - Research and Studies
 - Guiding and Trapping
 - Recreation and Access
 - Forestry
 - Water
 - Agriculture
 - Grazing
 - Mining
 - Petroleum/Natural Gas
 - Land Alienation (including land uses compatible and incompatible with proposed wildlife management)
 - Other
- V Summary
- VI References

APPENDIX II

PRESCRIPTIONS FOR USE OF TIMBER OR FORAGE1) Properties Owned by the Ministry of Environmenta) Timber Removal or Christmas Tree Cutting

The Ministry of Environment and Parks will acquire a timber mark and supervise cutting. Any revenue derived from the sale of timber would be paid into general revenue, unless the property was acquired through the Habitat Conservation Fund or a similar fund, in which case revenues would be paid to the Fund.

b) Forage Disposition

The Ministry of Environment will be responsible for forage disposition, presumably by contract, and is free to charge the market price. Fees would be paid to general revenue, unless the property was acquired through the Habitat Conservation Fund or a similar fund, which would receive the fees.

2) Leased Properties

On land leased from The Nature Trust of B.C., the Ministry of Environment does not automatically have the right to dispose of forage and timber by contract. Permission of The Nature Trust of B.C. is prerequisite. Revenues derived from such leases are paid to The Nature Trust.

Management rights on leases from other organizations will depend entirely on the clauses in the lease document. If the Ministry wishes to have rights of timber removal and forage allocation, these should be negotiated at the time that the lease is prepared.

3) Land Act Transfersa) Timber Removal or Christmas Tree Cutting

Disposal of forest resources on all reserves will be by timber sale. The Ministry of Environment will draw up prescriptions for the cut, and, if necessary, mark trees for removal. The Ministry of Forests will then advertise the timber sale and supervise cutting. Cutting prescriptions require the approval of a Registered Professional Forester.

b) Forage Allocation

The Range Division of the Ministry of Forests will allocate forage by permit, according to Ministry of Environment prescriptions and consistent with grazing plans.